



# THE NILE

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Qui aquam Nili bibit rursus bibet

The Nile is Egypt and Egypt is the Nile. Were it not for the life-giving waters of the mighty river the fertile land of Egypt would be a sandy wilderness.

The Thames has been described as « liquid history ». With even greater aptness might the phrase be applied to the River Nile. Long before modern Europe, as Kipling put it « fretting in the womb of Rome », the Nile had already seen empires rise and fall, watched civilisations wax and wane.

The Egyptians, fully aware that their livelihood depended wholly on the Nile, deified the river and sang to him their most beautiful hymns. This is what one of the most ancient Egyptian poets has to say in a poem full of life and simplicity.

« It is not surprising to see this great sovereign.

Imposing on us no taxes ?

And one who at the same time, loyal to his subjects, keeps faith in his promises ?

Here is how, regularly and increasingly, he keeps his promises and offers all his gifts to Upper and to Lower Egypt.

To the poor and the rich, to the strong and the weak without differentiation or favouritism.

Here are his gifts, more precious than silver and gold...

And more valuable than pearls !

Fortell me, my friends ! Can one eat silver and gold, even if they are of the purest ? Can one feed on pearls, even if they are of the most perfect ? »

This little brochure does not aspire to give more than a few impressions, a bird's-eye view, of the Nile that is Egypt, that is to say from the Mediterranean to the Sudan.

Shall we then start at one of the twin mouths of the Nile ? At the sleepy old town of Rosetta or at Damietta where a crusading army once camped ?

At either mouth it is curious to see how, far out from the coast, the Nile waters maintain their silvery colour against the blue of the Mediterranean.

Through the Delta green fields of incomparable fertility stretch to the horizon on either side, water-wheels, as used in Pharaonic days, may be seen at intervals along the banks. Here and there, close to the villages, women and girls are drawing water which, in jars and tins, they carry away on their heads, with almost incredible grace. Sailing boats pass up and down, their tall sails etched in white against a sky of cloudless blue.

Even the shortest journey on Nile waters brings home to the traveller that the river is indeed the life-blood of Egypt. But he will notice also that, mindful of its value, Egypt has learned to husband the precious water. Barrages and reservoirs are like the sailing boats and ancient water-wheels, a constantly recurring feature of the Nile

landscape. Where the two mouths of the river meet, at the apex of the Delta triangle, stands the great Delta Barrage a triumph of modern engineering. Close by, are the wonderfully beautiful Barrage Gardens, a living illustration of what can be achieved when gardening skill combines with the climate of Egypt and the generous gifts of the Nile.

Having arrived in Cairo, the tourist encounters the most ancient civilizations of the world: the treasures of the Pharaohs and the Egyptian Museum of Antiquities are there side by side with masterpieces of the Islamic and Coptic Museum.

There too, reminiscent of the past, are the old quarters and the picturesque markets from which is wafted the perfume of the East, mysterious and attractive. The grand mosques and superb churches mark another stage, though less ancient, it is true, in civilization and art.

Modern Cairo is not less interesting, with its big open squares, its admirable corniche now 28 miles long, with beautiful buildings and luxurious hotels. Let us not forget the casinos and open-air restaurants scattered along the banks of the Nile.

Helwan, just south of Cairo, is a health resort noted for its sulphur springs and its mineral waters which surpass those of Vichy. The visitor can there enjoy the resplendent sun and absolute quiet.

It is a picturesque town, rich in scenes of an astonishing variety, where one finds at the same time rocky hills and the green valley the desert and the Nile. Its wax museum recalls the most outstanding landmarks in the country's history. The famous observatory and the ex-royal rest house complete the attractions of this suburb.

Throughout its course the Nile is picturesque. But it is not until Cairo has been left behind that the historical interest becomes paramount. From afar, silhouetted against the clear Egyptian sky, the great Pyramids of Giza are beckoning to the traveller.

Within easy distance of the Nile banks, sometimes on the very Bank itself, monuments of Ancient Egypt call for constant halts on our journey up the Nile. Landing at Badrashein we wend our way to Sakkara with its Step Pyramids, its Alabaster Sphinx, its Serapeum, its tombs. There is much to see at Sakkara and the traveller is tempted to linger. But more wonders await us further up the river.

At Assiut the largest city in Upper Egypt, we pass another great Barrage. From then on the journey is a rapid succession of temples and monuments. We pass Baliana with its temple of Abydos, Dendera with its temple of Athor. Their majesty and beauty are compelling and yet... « the best is yet to be » ...Luxor still lies ahead.

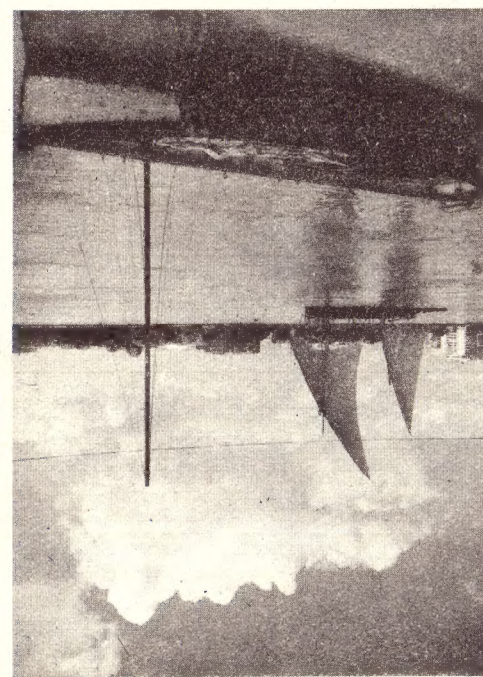
Luxor has only one fault. Its climate is perfect, its surroundings and situation are delightful but ... there is too much to see ! There is Karnak, awe-inspiring mysterious Karnak; there is the stately Temple of Luxor, the temple of Kourna, the Valley of the Kings where the glories of Tutankhamen's tomb were unveiled to a wondering world, the temple of Deir El Bahari, the Ramasseum, the Valley of the Queens, the Temple of Medinet Habu, the Colossi of Memnon.

At Esna, Edfu and Kom Ombo more beautiful temples await our inspection.

Aswan is the next halt, and we see again what man has done in mastering the waters of the Nile. Here is the giant dam, the enormous reservoir whose waters almost cover the Temple of Philae. Even the layman's mind will admire the grandeur of the Aswan Dam and the lover of beauty will find, to his great surprise, that it has added to,



BOATS ON THE NILE, CAIRO.



TAHRIR SQUARE, CAIRO.

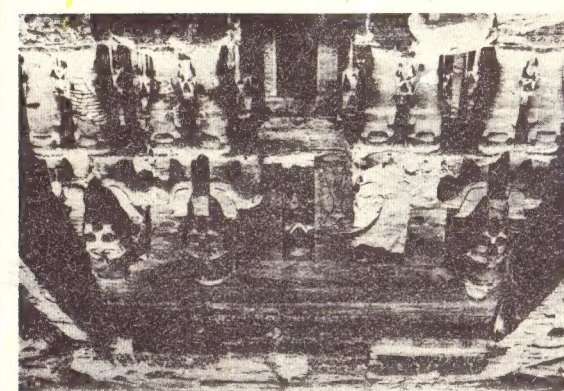
and not detracted from the charm of the Nile. The contrast between the stern, stark strength of the granite boulders and the dancing rainbows on the captive waters is one that lingers in the most un-retentive memory.

The traveller who wishes to go further south leaves his boat at Aswan and re-embarks at Shellal where the turbulent river once again, becomes a smooth and flowing waterway. Between Shellal and Wadi Halfa there is the famous rock temple of Abu Simbel and at Wadi Halfa we have reached Journey's End.

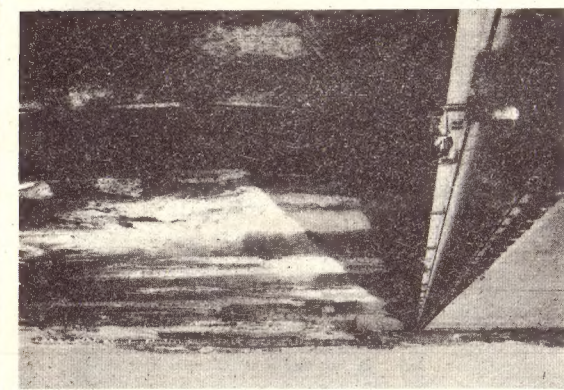
This short sketch has omitted much that might be said, that ought to be said, about the Nile. About the fish that teems in its waters; at Aswan it is often possible to land a catch that looks like a « fisherman's tale », about the flocks of birds that are one of the charms of Nile scenery; the glorious sunshine, the cooling breezes, the ever-changing colour of the landscape. Nor have we said, as we should have done at the start, that excellent passenger steamers and aeroplanes ply up and down the Nile during the Winter months and that the railway which runs almost parallel to the river, enables the traveller to alight at any spot of interest. Perhaps we should have said something about moonlight trips in Nile sailing boats :

« When the moon is on the waters  
And the river fairies dance... »

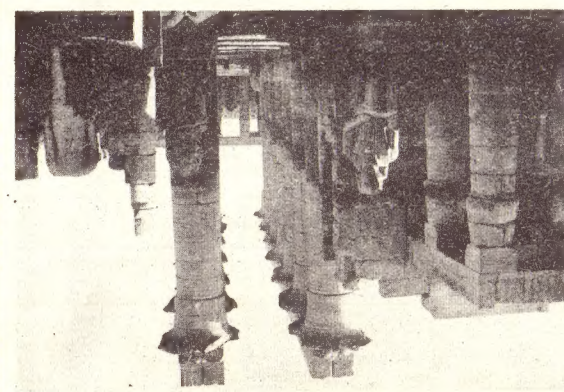
And finally, should we not say (though it is a truism) that the Nile which is Egypt and Egypt which is the Nile reserve the warmest of welcome to visitors from other lands. Accommodation of every kind, and within the reach of every purse, is available. Travel is easy, expenses are moderate, attractions are innumerable. The Nile, ever the most alluring of rivers, has become today the most accessible and the most inviting.



THE ASSWAN DAM.



THE TEMPLE OF LUXOR.



THE TEMPLE OF EDFU.



AERIAL VIEW OF THE AGRICULTURE SOCIETY BUILDING, CAIRO.

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
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